



Independent Electrical Contractors of New England, Inc.

TO: The Honorable Edith Prague and Rep. Kevin Ryan
Members of the Labor Committee

From: Lisa Hutner, Executive Director

Date: February 24, 2009

Re: HB-5515

The Independent Electrical Contractors of New England (IEC-NE) *opposes HB-5515, which will allow municipalities to impose wage and benefit standards on contractors.*

With both residential and commercial construction at an almost standstill and customers concerned about making ends meet, those of us in the electrical trades are facing some very challenging times. We are doing what we can to control our costs but are faced each year with increases in health insurance, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation and energy costs.

Allowing towns to indiscriminately set wage and benefit standards for contractors, regardless of size, type of industry, etc. makes absolutely no sense in this economy. Wages for apprentices, with built-in progressive increases, must already be approved by the state Department of Labor, which helps determine wages when apprentices reach journeymen status. Allowing towns to set different wage standards would be a nightmare.

Many employers are struggling to find affordable health insurance. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of options out there for small employers. If a town set a benefit level that was too expensive or unavailable for small employers, it would effectively shut small contractors out of doing business in that town.

Many small employers are sole proprietors, whose owners are war veterans who may receive property tax abatement as individuals. It is unclear under this bill whether such abatements would subject the owner to wage and benefit standards set by the town.

If we are to help Connecticut move toward economic recovery, we cannot make it any more difficult or costly for small and midsize employers to do business in this state. We respectfully urge you to reject this bill.

The Independent Electrical Contractors of New England is the premier trade association representing Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island independent electrical contractors aggressively working with the industry to establish a free environment for merit shop -- a philosophy that promotes the concept of free enterprise, open competition and economic opportunity for all.

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